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Small Credit to Either

Neither President Kennedy nor Richard M. Nixon comes off very well in their dispute over the Cuban issue in the 1960 campaign.

The President no doubt is correct in denying Mr. Nixon's charge that he had been officially briefed on American training and support of a Cuba invasion force; former CIA Chief Allen Dulles bears him out. But this is not the main question. Whether or not he was officially told of the Eisenhower Administration's plans for intervention, Mr. Kennedy did come very close to advocating intervention himself.

This was one of the most disappointing aspects of his campaign. As we said at the time, Mr. Kennedy was talking out of both sides of his mouth, speaking against Latin American intervention in general terms but coming close to advocating it in the specific case of Cuba. This was a tragic error, and we trust that the President now recognizes it as such. But it was not, as Mr. Nixon confusedly charges, a threat to the security of the CIA operation.

The most astonishing aspect of the dispute is Mr. Nixon's present contention that he was one of the principal architects of the invasion plan, but that Mr. Kennedy jockeyed him into publicly opposing it in order to "protect" security. This makes no sense whatever.

The Vice President's fine statement against intervention, during the last television debate, was one of the most creditable and responsible of his campaign. But he was not compelled to make it in order to preserve the secrecy of the invasion plans. Furthermore, he neglects to mention that after arguing against intervention he went on to argue for a Cuba policy patterned on the one we had followed in Guatemala—which was a policy of intervention.

Then, as always, Mr. Nixon was managing to occupy both sides of the question in some degree. He now caps it all by repudiating that half of his position in which he was most clearly wrong and which most closely approximated a defensible principle. What a stranger he is to any deeply held conviction has set out here so sharply demonstrated.